

TAKE ACTION GUIDE:

OUT OF ALEPPO



ABOUT THE FILM

In 2013, under the pretense that they would take an extended holiday and return in a month, Mohammad Shasho's family left their home in Aleppo, Syria. As the conflict in Syria worsened, the temporary flight became a permanent escape. Mohammad's father—a surgeon—traveled to Germany on a fragile raft. One year later, Mohammad, his mother, and his four siblings endured the treacherous journey to Turkey by raft and were reunited with their father and husband in Berlin.

As Mohammad and his family work to reclaim a sense of normalcy, a deadly attack at a Berlin Christmas market fills them with the defeating, familiar sense that danger lurks everywhere. In his film OUT OF ALEPPO, Mohammad gives voice to new friends who, after traveling to safety without their families, do not know if they will ever see their loved ones again. In documenting the stories of these "unaccompanied minors" as they attempt to work through the complex set of emotions and the traumas they have endured, a particularly harrowing aspect of this humanitarian crisis emerges. In his documentary, our 17-year-old filmmaker explores loss, art and hope.

LEARN MORE

When thinking about the issues of citizenship, nationality, family and safety, consider Articles 9, 13, 14, 15 and 27 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 9:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 13:

(1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state. (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.

Article 14:

(1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

(2) This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15:

(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality.

(2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 27:

(1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

REFLECT AND SHARE

1. Consider the movement of people around the world, today and over time. Throughout the history of humankind, there have been refugees—people escaping violence, famine or persecution to find a new, peaceful life elsewhere. From early humans to biblical times, from ancient civilizations to colonial times to today, there have always been people who wander the globe in search of a safer, better, freer life.

Research some of these diasporas. Choose up to 5 examples of refugees from around the world and throughout time. What were these people trying to escape? Where did they go? What was their journey like? What or who met them when they arrived? In what ways have they assimilated over time? In what ways have they managed to maintain and preserve their cultural ways?

Create a map of the globe and trace their journeys in different colors. What do these groups have in common? How do their experiences differ? What have these different groups of refugees brought with them, or contributed to their countries of residence?

2. Mohammad and his family struggle with their identity as Muslims and Syrians in their new home in Germany. They are grateful for the safety and support they enjoy but miss their homeland, a feeling that is particularly poignant because they know they may never be able to return to Syria.

Consider your own experiences. Have you ever felt like you didn't fit in, that you didn't belong? Have you ever felt like a "stranger in a strange land?" How can you relate to the struggles and heartache of Mohammad and his family?

In his film, Mohammad uses poetry and theater as therapy for his feelings of exclusion, confusion and loss. How have you used art to express and counteract big feelings in your own life? Choose an artistic modality—film, music, visual art, poetry or performance—and create your own response to Mohammad's film, based on your personal reflections. As you are creating your piece and thinking about your or your family's experiences with exile, movement, loss and discovery of home, consider the UNDHR articles listed above, particularly Article 13 (2): "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."

TAKE ACTION

1. Sign a petition or start one of your own to raise awareness of refugees, refugee aid, and global policies that affect refugees at: [change.org](https://www.change.org).
2. Every day, volunteer rescuers who call themselves the White Helmets rush to the scenes of bombings to pull people out from under the rubble and carry them to safety. They have saved hundreds of thousands of lives in the war zones of Syria. Learn more about what they do and how to support their efforts here: whitehelmets.org/index.php/about-us/areas-operation.
3. Host a community or private screening of OUT OF ALEPPO to raise awareness of this humanitarian crisis and how storytelling through film can help deepen our understanding of global issues. Email info@bykids.org for more information.
4. Support Syrian refugees by hosting a community bake sale, book sale, or charity drive for the International Rescue Committee: rescue.org/article/crisis-syria-what-know-and-how-help.
5. Unsure of how to help? Write a letter to a refugee telling them they're not alone, even from miles away: my.care.org/site/SPageNavigator/CARE_SpecialDelivery.html.

ABOUT BYKIDS

BYkids produces real-world films for kids, by kids. Talented young storytellers from around the world are paired with seasoned filmmakers to create powerful documentaries about their lives. In partnership with public television and education innovators, we share the films and their educational resources to help make global issues feel personal, relevant and actionable for millions of students. Our work serves as a catalyst for change, igniting important conversations and inspiring a new generation of social activists. To support our work, visit bykids.org/donate.

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